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# DOES GERMANY MENACE THE WORLD'S PEACE?

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE ONLY "OFFENSIVE" NAVY.

BY W. G. FITZ-GERALD.

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AMONG all the blazing indiscretions of Prince Hohenlohe's "Memoirs" no feature was so embarrassing to the German Emperor, acknowledged War Lord of the world, as the continued harping on the fact of his requiring his new Navy for purely "offensive purposes."

But this statement, even coming from an Imperial Chancellor, has long been discounted; Europe is convinced that the Kaiser means mischief when his fleet of "Dreadnoughts" is complete, or nearly so. And no fewer than eighteen are projected, each mounting sixteen eleven-inch guns in the primary battery, as against the ten twelve-inch guns of the British ships.

There are besides, built or building, a horde of giant cruisers, destroyers, torpedo-boats of 600 tons, and submarines that are the sum of all others. The Reichstag is to be asked for \$50,000,000 to widen and deepen the Kiel Canal and dredge the troublesome harbors so as to admit of monsters like the new "Ersatz Sachsen" and her sisters passing from the Baltic to the North Sea.

Kiel and Wilhelmshaven are fast becoming immense naval arsenals; and within five years the Emperor's dream of "Weltpolitik," with a mighty fleet for a symbol and "more markets; more room for my people," as a shibboleth, is to be realized, as set forth in the inspired preamble to the Navy Act of 1900: "Germany must have a fleet of such strength that a war, even against the mightiest naval power, would involve risks threatening the Supremacy of that Power." This dictum, by the way, was a start-

ling advance on the very modest suggestion brought before the Reichstag three years previously. But the Kaiser walked warily, knowing the pitfalls that beset even his privileged feet.

History records no such dramatic incident, nor one fraught with such momentous possibilities, as the sudden appearance of this "Offensive" Navy. It has been described as "the most amazing achievement in statecraft ever accomplished by a single man." A little more than fifty years ago a German war-ship was unknown on the sea. A mere decade ago there were but a few insignificant ironclads guarding the Baltic and Black sea coasts; whereas next year the Empire looks for positive supremacy on the sea, as well as on land—a condition unknown in the world's modern history.

On the very day of his father's death the present Emperor issued a General Order to his Navy, and from that day to this he has striven with the enthusiasm of a fanatic; the force of a Bismarck, and the wiliness of a Machiavelli, to educate his people to the needs of a Navy. "Our future lies on the sea," he told them.

He founded the German Navy League, which in a few years had a membership of half a million and an income of \$180,000; he proved to British Naval Constructor Sir Edward Reed that he could design, navigate and fight a first-class battle-ship; and even the Imperial yacht "*Hohenzollern*" was made into a formidable object-lesson in matters naval, so that it might carry the lesson wherever it went.

But the Emperor met indifference at first, and worse. Fettered with a colossal militarism that has turned the Empire into an armed camp, the people set their face against a big Navy,—a fleet not only capable of defending their insignificant coast-line, but of operating on the offensive in distant seas.

Their burden was already grievous. True, the best classes sympathized in part with their Emperor's ambitions for national greatness; but they complained his pace was so rapid he was exhausting the nation's vitality. Thus the current Budget shows a deficit of more than \$80,000,000.

During the von Bülow Administration it was pointed out the National Debt increased \$612,500,000; and colonial expenditure likewise grew to amazing proportions, with very barren results. The heaviest item under this head from 1893 to 1898 was but \$2,125,000; whereas last year the colonial expenditure totalled \$51,750,-

000; and \$45,000,000 worth of new taxation was voted last spring. Wilhelm II, it is an open secret, is bitterly disappointed with the failure of his "colonies" in Southwest Africa—Namaqua, Wanepo and Damara—upon which \$175,000,000 has already been spent. The coast is appalling from a navigator's point of view, while the interior is a region of sand dunes, hot steppes, wild mountain ranges and arid veldt over which the Hottentot, Hendrick Witbooi, led the German eagles a weary dance that cost the War Office \$850,000 a week, in spite of the new rifle and the vaunted "S" ammunition.

But Kaiser and Chancellor, as we know, have triumphed right along, and carried the Reichstag with them in passing plans for naval armaments, which are being carried out with truly American vigor by the German Admiralty, who never dream of curtailing a programme or dropping out a ship, as is so often done by other national assemblies. The Socialists, who complain of \$4,000,000,000 having been squandered on armaments in a couple of decades, have been utterly routed; the Reichstag is still Imperial, and, as I shall show, the only "Offensive" Navy in the world is going forward at a feverish rate—even though the Empire has to sell \$50,000,000 in new bonds to make good, in part, the Naval Deficit above mentioned.

The Kaiser is inflexible in a matter involving what he told the new Reichstag is the "supreme duty of strengthening Germany's position among civilized nations." Now what "strengthening" she can want, with five millions of men already armed for battle, is not clear. Certain it is the Empire is now committed to a tremendous battle-ship-building programme for the next ten years; and it is grotesque to maintain that this mighty armada, with eighteen ten-million-dollar "Dreadnoughts" in the van, is wanted solely to guard 100 miles of mud-banks and shoals in the North Sea.

The appearance of the British "Dreadnought," as we know, revolutionized the world's navies by setting up a new standard of speed and gun-power; but Germany intends to form an enormous fleet composed entirely of "Dreadnoughts" so fast and powerful that as a homogeneous armada none other afloat will be able to bring them to battle.

Their main battery carries sixteen eleven-inch guns of fifty calibres, as against the "Dreadnought's" ten twelve-inch guns

of forty-five calibres. And the new German weapons are of an unknown type, firing so heavy a charge that the 793-pound shell will under battle conditions pierce the best twelve-inch Krupped armor afloat, at 7,000 yards.

The German Admiralty are satisfied they have designed the most powerful guns in existence; and each of the new monsters will carry six more of them than the next most powerful ironclad extant. The Germans have watched England, Japan, France and ourselves experimenting with giant ships in order to profit and improve upon all the best points, with special reference to German conditions. Thus, as her Navy will surely operate in the North Sea near home, and in the adjacent Atlantic, less space will be needed for coal and ammunition, leaving room for heavy artillery and far more of it. And the new German ships carry a tremendous secondary battery of four-inch and smaller guns, as shown in the "Ersatz Bayern" and her sisters; for it is in these smaller guns that the German Government found the "Dreadnought" so lacking. Money is to be poured out regardless of nothing but the Emperor's will. The Naval Estimates for the current year total \$70,000,000, with a host of "extras" (a million for submarines); and a prospect of immense annual increases for the next decade or so, until Germany shall be "as authoritative as was the Roman Empire." These words are the Kaiser's own; and all the world knows he means what he says. Next year there will be four monster German ships building to the four British, so that England will have fallen far below her classic "Two-Power Standard." It will be the same with certain 15,000-ton cruisers of a new type; while a 19,200-ton cruiser is to be built as a reply to the British "Indomitable" of 17,250 tons. Thus Germany will own the most powerful cruiser in all the world, far exceeding anything that Great Britain, the United States or Japan can show; her speed, with Parsons' turbines, will be over twenty-five knots—faster than the torpedo-boats of a decade ago! The horse-power developed will be nearly 50,000, and the cost above forty million marks. Here indeed is a startling programme.

The British Government, taxed on the subject recently by anxious members of Parliament, assured their hecklers they could build much faster than an upstart naval power like Germany. Now while that may have been true ten years ago, it is

certainly not true to-day, whether of private or Imperial yards. The German battle-ship "Barbarossa" was built in two years and nine months; the British "Albion" took four years and seven months. Again, the German "Braunschweig" was finished in two years and eleven months; while the British "New Zealand" took three years and five months. And quite recently the "Schlesien," 13,500 tons, the last of the "Deutschland" class to take the water, was launched in six months from the date of her keel being laid!

Indeed, the world's amazement on this subject would be much more pronounced were it not for the almost impenetrable veil of secrecy which Germany throws over her new ambitions. Count Ernst von Reventlow, her most distinguished naval expert, has cautioned all editors to refrain "on patriotic grounds" from too precipitate publication of the Empire's naval secrets. And there are hints in Paris that the new German "Dreadnoughts" will spring surprises on the world's Admiralties.

Plans are quietly laid before the Reichstag, and then passed unanimously and put into execution forthwith, as in the case of the six huge armored cruisers added to the Programme of 1900, and the flotilla of forty-eight fast and powerful "coastal destroyers" of 520 tons and twenty-eight knots. And before long Germany will have ample docking facilities for her new monsters, thanks to the immense programme of dredging and constructive work now going forward in both seas.

For years past the Admiralty have been spending immense sums in new docks and general extension of the great yards at Kiel and Wilhelmshaven. At the latter port docks Nos. 4, 5 and 6 are now complete and will take in any "Dreadnought." The work of extending Kiel Dockyard, however, has been more difficult than at Wilhelmshaven, for ground has had to be recovered from the harbor.

Beyond doubt it is from the Kiel Canal that the Emperor has received his severest check. When it was opened, twelve years ago, the biggest battle-ship afloat was the British "Inflexible," of 11,880 tons. "We doubt," said the German Admiralty, in effect, "whether 15,000 tons will ever be exceeded. At all events, why should we exceed this, with our home waters in the North Sea so shallow?" Accordingly, ships were designed to fit the canal as trains for a tunnel.

The destruction—by mine, torpedo or explosion—of the recent Japanese battle-ships “Yashima,” “Hatsuse” and “Mikasa” in the late war, seemed an additional argument against putting too many golden eggs in one big basket. But then came the recent sessions of the British Admiralty, supplied with unique data from the Japanese Admirals. And after these the “Dreadnought,” an entirely new type, thousands of tons heavier than any battle-ship afloat, fast as a scout, because of turbine instead of reciprocating engines, in gun-power the mistress of the sea.

Now no “Dreadnought” can pass through the sixty miles of strategic waterway known as the Kiel Canal, for it is but twenty-seven feet deep, with docks both narrow and poor. The Kaiser and his advisers debated long on the perplexing situation, but realized at last that the all Big Gun, Big Ship, with her consort, the enormous armored cruiser, had come to stay; and that they, too, must begin anew, as it were, and lay down giants.

With amazing energy the defeat was faced, enormously costly mistakes written off as unavoidable, and a tremendous programme of 18,000 ton “Dreadnoughts,” and formidable armored cruisers of 15,000 tons and more, undertaken instead. Yet even now the German designers cling to their own types. For some reason they do not believe in the twelve-inch gun; there is no such weapon in their navy. And they continue to produce some, at least, of the smaller war-ships. Thus an entirely new type of small cruisers is built or building with a speed of twenty-four knots, and the British experts declare these will certainly *not* be found in the North Sea and Baltic when Germany thinks the time has arrived to deal a sudden and smashing blow.

Already the Australians are beginning to feel uneasy about the security of their growing sea-borne trade. German naval officers make no secret of the fact that their navy is not only intended to strike at Great Britain, but that they will rely largely for success in the suddenness of the attack.

According to the “Indiscreet Chancellor,” the German military party was thoroughly hostile to Great Britain so far back as 1890; and of late strenuous efforts have been made to maintain an “active service fleet” consisting of two squadrons, one of eight and the other of ten first-class battle-ships of the line, with a reserve of four ironclads and ten cruisers and four smaller vessels for use as scouts.

German strategists and writers are constantly devising theoretical attacks and designs upon Great Britain. One plan was the collection in the port of Hamburg of shipping with a gross tonnage of 500,000 tons, followed by the hostile descent of 250,000 picked troops upon the British shores. The invading army was to bring with it but few impedimenta, save bicycles for the hybrid arm that was to take the place of cavalry. Only the other day thirty-six fast German destroyers, manœuvring off Cuxhaven, suddenly received orders to make a dash for the British Coast, and they certainly succeeded in escaping detection by the British naval authorities.

Ever since the amazing disclosures of Prince Hohenlohe, England has been keenly alert in all matters pertaining to the "Offensive Navy"; and public men whose opinions carry weight have been gravely warning the public that the hour of trial may be at hand. Sir Edward Russell declares "it is absolute folly to hide our eyes to the fact that all the war equipment of Germany is aimed against Great Britain."

Germany, it is explained, must have space to colonize in, and such space can only be acquired after defeating England. Africa is already parcelled out between France and Great Britain; the Monroe Doctrine bars South America—at present. Moves in Asia Minor are hampered at every turn; and another Kiao-Chou would precipitate war before Germany was ready. And as the French know, Germany never *does* strike until she *is* ready. Moreover, the vast French indemnity after Sedan would be nothing to what England would be called upon to pay were she to sue for peace. And besides money, Germany would doubtless promptly occupy Asia Minor and Egypt, thus holding the key to India.

Incidentally, it is said that another important goal of Germany is no less a nation than Brazil, and that if once the United States could be induced to abandon the Monroe Doctrine, then the Fatherland would absorb that big slice of South America and be satisfied. Certain it is that just now the Germans are suffering from "Reichsverdrossenheit." In other words they are "fed up" on Empire, and not even their troubles in Southwest Africa can make them falter in the perfecting of their "Offensive" Fleet.

That fleet's activity is best seen at home at Kiel, on the Baltic or in the great naval harbor at Wilhelmshaven, lying behind its

dykes twenty feet high. Here scores of millions of dollars have been spent on harbors, forts, strategic railroads, docks and general works. Wilhelmshaven contains 35,000 inhabitants, practically every one of whom is in some way or other connected with the new Navy. It is sought by wire-pulling in Denmark to close the Baltic Sea altogether to foreign fleets, thereby securing effective protection for the German Coast, and particularly for the port of Kiel. At any moment it is thought Germany may make a fresh move in Holland, and the inclusion of that country in the German Empire is one of the absolute certainties of the near future, unless France and England are both so strong by land and sea as to make such a project more than perilous to the Kaiser.

It is thought, too, that a reconstruction of Central Europe may at any time add sixteen million Germans, at present under the Austrian flag, to the German dominions; and, moreover, with the passing of each decade, Germany adds eleven millions to her population, as against the five millions of England and France combined. European strategic writers are unanimous in asserting that Germany will not wait until Russia has recovered, but will "advance" within two or three years at the outside, by which time she will have a magnificent offensive fleet, manned by scientists even more thorough than the Japanese themselves, and capable, as her officers openly boast, of dealing a swift and crushing blow upon Britain's sea-power. In this fleet lies the secret of British resentment towards Germany. That feeling flared forth over the proposed German "demonstration" in the North Sea when the famous "Mad-Dog Fleet" under Rojestvensky attacked the inoffensive fishing-smacks off the Dogger Bank. At first sight it would seem difficult to explain the friction and bad feeling that unquestionably exist between these two great nations. There is no sharply defined point of issue, such as Morocco was recently between Germany and France, but on the other hand, no secret is made of the fact that the "Offensive" Navy is aimed at British power.

It is little wonder, therefore, that Germany absolutely vetoed any talk of the limitation of armaments at the Hague Peace Conference, when she was employed in putting the finishing-touches to a tremendous Navy, which one of her late Imperial Chancellors calmly assures the world is needed only for "Offensive Purposes."

W. G. FITZ-GERALD.